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Summary record of the 4th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 23 June 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Løvald ..... (Norway)

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08-39636 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

1. **The Chairperson** said he took it that the Commission wished to hold an open meeting, in accordance with its practice at previous meetings.

2. *It was so decided.*

Adoption of the agenda (PBC/2/BDI/8)

3. *The agenda was adopted.*

Adoption of the recommendations of the biannual review of the implementation of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi (PBC/2/BDI/L.2)

4. **The Chairperson** congratulated the Government of Burundi on its leadership in the preparations for the biannual review exercise and on its comprehensive progress report on implementation of the Strategic Framework. While the Strategic Framework set out the commitments of all stakeholders in the peacebuilding process, national ownership was an overarching principle of cooperation that was enshrined in the Strategic Framework document itself.

5. He took it that the members of the Burundi configuration wished to adopt the recommendations of the biannual review of the implementation of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi (PBC/2/BDI/L.2).

6. *It was so decided.*

7. **Ms. Batumubwira** (Burundi, Minister for Foreign Affairs) thanked the Commission for its help in peacebuilding in Burundi. The Commission had participated energetically in identifying the priority areas where rapid action was needed to create conditions conducive to lasting peace. The Commission had then supported the country's actions and advocated on its behalf to obtain the means that were needed to consolidate peace. The Government and people of Burundi would always be grateful.

8. Generally speaking, the trends, progress, and outcomes of commitments were showing positive movement in all peacebuilding areas. In the area of governance, the National Assembly had resumed working and was now operating normally. It had begun to examine bills submitted by the Government, some of which had been pending for a long time, such as the one on the revision of the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure. Those laws would soon come into force, improving the handling of certain crimes which in the past had not been well covered, such as gender-based violence and offences against minors. The judicial and police structures involved in the fight against corruption were already working, but needed capacity-building to be more effective.

9. The implementation of the ceasefire agreements between the Government and the Palipehutu-Forces nationales de libération (FNL), and the Magaliesberg Communiqué of 10 June 2008, by which the two sides had undertaken to renounce violence and resolve all their differences by dialogue, were the expression of a new and more hopeful security situation. The ongoing process of making the army and the National Police into more professional bodies had significantly improved security and would help to promote the rule of law.

10. In the area of the rule of law and the fight against impunity, work was in progress on setting up the mechanisms of transitional justice. Delays in the undertaking were not a matter of grave concern, many of them having to do with administrative constraints rather than political difficulties. Relations between the political authorities on the one hand and the media and civil society on the other had significantly improved. More work was still needed, but that would be facilitated by the results of the projects financed by the Peacebuilding Fund.

11. Against that broadly positive background, she wished to add a few words of warning. The peace process was facing several challenges, despite the goodwill of the partners. While peace did now seem irreversible, the delay in reaching a ceasefire agreement between the Government and the Palipehutu-FNL in particular had hindered the restoration of security and the rule of law. The legal framework for the 2010 elections could not be drawn up until after the reintegration of the Palipehutu-FNL, as otherwise the election results would be rejected by that group. Further, the strategy for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration had to be reconsidered, in view of the risk that the current high level of unemployment and the lack of prospects for demobilized combatants would drive them to take up violent crime or join new rebellions, particularly as the surrounding region was not yet completely at peace.

12. The massive return of refugees, while certainly a peace dividend in itself, was becoming a new source of conflicts between those returning and the current

occupiers of their land. In addition, the former exiles were experiencing severe frustration at the inability of their mother country to accommodate them appropriately, owing to a lack of resources. Those conflicts were only one part of the problem: there were further conflicts between internally displaced persons and those who had remained in their home area. Beyond the immediate economic problems, the question of land tenure promised to be a long-term problem, owing to the sociocultural significance of land ownership, excessive subdividing of inherited land, overpopulation and archaic farming methods.

13. She was pleased to see that the Peacebuilding Commission shared those concerns, as exemplified in the recommendations that had just been adopted, with which the Government of Burundi was in full accord. She cautioned, however, that the fact that the Commission and the Government were in agreement would not, in itself, be sufficient to establish a definitive peace in Burundi. As it worked in the country to make the population aware of the implications of peacebuilding, the Government had become aware of how impatient people were to enjoy the dividends of peace.

14. In order to offer access to basic social services, provide food security, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis and rehabilitate all categories of war wounded, peacebuilding efforts in Burundi would need resources far exceeding those initially envisaged, because many unanticipated factors, including the rise in the price of oil, had upset all the initial financial forecasts. The world food security crisis, which was felt more keenly in post-conflict countries such as Burundi, the integration of the Palipehutu-FNL in national institutions, initiatives for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and the reinsertion of returnees had all been added to the list of peacebuilding priorities.

15. In order to meet all those needs, the Government of Burundi was requesting once again the disbursement of the funds pledged by the partners at the Donor Round-table Conference held in May 2007, and at the same time expressing its thanks to those partners that had already met their commitments. Receiving the promised funds would enable the Government to link the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, giving both approaches a long-term chance of success.

16. **Ms. Mulamula** (International Conference on the Great Lakes Region) said she was pleased to see a regional approach gaining ground as a way to address the challenges facing Burundi. She noted with satisfaction that the recommendations just adopted included one on working with the Government of Burundi on its plans for regional integration.

17. The Pact on Peace, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region had entered into force. That was very positive news, since the Pact provided a strong legal foundation for joint action on issues which some years earlier could not even have been touched upon between some of the States concerned. Its entry into force had opened up a new phase of implementation of various projects and protocols on peace and security, democracy and good governance, economic development and regional integration, as well as humanitarian and social issues. The Pact should thus be seen as a strong foundation for the consolidation of peace both in Burundi and in the wider region. Indeed, the International Conference, through its newly formed secretariat, had been involved in the peace process not only in Burundi but also in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Uganda and the Sudan.

18. One issue of concern was the need to highlight the development dimension of the Pact. In the case of Burundi, the challenge in the post-conflict period was to ensure that the people saw the benefits arising from the Pact, the so-called peace dividend. The International Conference had organized a series of technical workshops to prepare for the implementation of projects and protocols addressing the specific needs of member States, including Burundi. There was a close correlation between those projects and the recommendations in the biannual review, notably with reference to democracy and good governance, peace and security, and humanitarian and social issues. For all of those issues the International Conference provided a comprehensive regional framework for the exchange of good practices and created opportunities for transboundary joint actions relating to the return of refugees, regional development efforts in border zones and other issues. She encouraged all stakeholders, including the Government of Burundi and its international partners, to exploit further the opportunities for coordinated action arising from that convergence of focus areas.

19. **Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan) said that the current meeting marked an important stage in the Commission's consideration of the peacebuilding efforts in Burundi. National ownership and leadership of the peacebuilding process were very important. The views expressed by Burundi's Minister for Foreign Affairs on the key challenges and priorities to be addressed should continue to guide the Commission's future work, the main objective of which must be to translate commitments into action that would quickly yield tangible benefits for the people.

20. **Ms. Viotti** (Brazil) said that the biannual review of the Strategic Framework, as well as the recommendations that had just been adopted, provided clear guidance for the consolidation of peace and the promotion of development in Burundi. While it was encouraging to observe the positive developments that had taken place since the Peacebuilding Commission had begun its engagement with Burundi, it was clear that huge challenges still remained. Even the welcome fact that many refugees were returning was also creating new difficulties, notably in the area of land ownership. Brazil particularly welcomed the recommendation relating to the need to pursue innovative approaches and to marshal resources to promote socio-economic recovery, given the risk that the global food crisis posed to peacebuilding and development.

21. **Mr. Øyen** (Norway), speaking in his capacity as Norway's Special Envoy for Burundi and the Great Lakes Region, said that his Government fully supported the recommendations just adopted in support of peacebuilding in Burundi. Welcoming and supporting the recent undertaking by the Government of Burundi and the Palipehutu-FNL to end hostilities, Norway trusted that the parties would scrupulously adhere to the agreement between them and would not take any action that might hinder progress. At the same time, Norway was aware of the Peacebuilding Commission's call for the international community to assist Burundi in fighting poverty and ensuring social and economic recovery. Consequently, he had been instructed by his Government to pledge 100 million Norwegian kroner (approximately US$ 20 million) in budgetary support to Burundi. That figure comprised the 60 million kroner already earmarked plus an additional 40 million as a direct result of the positive political outcome of the recent historic meeting in South Africa between the Government of Burundi, the Palipehutu-FNL and the Special Envoys. The budgetary support would allow the Government of Burundi to create a safety net to protect vulnerable groups during the crucial period that lay ahead, and Norway hoped that other partner countries would follow its example.

22. When discussing the situation in fragile States it was easy to focus exclusively on problems and challenges, and in the case of Burundi they were indeed daunting. But it was important never to forget the many small steps constantly being made towards the consolidation of peace. The Burundian Government and other national stakeholders were to be commended for all their efforts to complete the peacebuilding agenda as established through the work of the Peacebuilding Commission. He also commended the Regional Peace Initiative and the South African facilitation team for their indispensable role in support of durable peace in Burundi, describing them as excellent examples of Africa's capacity to provide solutions to pressing issues on the African continent.

23. **Mr. Roelants de Stappers** (Belgium) recalled that on 27 May 2008 the Peacebuilding Commission had held a thematic meeting on land issues in Burundi, and had produced an excellent document. It would be necessary to return to those issues later in the year, perhaps on the basis of the recommendations in the document. He reported on a seminar organized by the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in May 2008, which had brought together expatriate Burundians from some 15 countries. The objective of the seminar had been to make expatriate Burundians aware of recent occurrences in the country and to seek to involve them in its economic development. Consideration was currently being given to the establishment of a standing framework for cooperation between expatriate Burundians and their home country.

24. Recalling that work in the Burundian legislature had been at a standstill for several months, he said that Belgium was working very actively on capacity-building operations to prevent the recurrence of such a situation. With regard to transitional justice, the Tripartite Steering Committee had been established, but there was still a need to define the procedural details of the national consultations that would take place prior to the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms. It would also be necessary to achieve a delicate balance between the judiciary component and the reconciliation component.

25. Following the recent ceasefire agreement between the Burundian Government and the Palipehutu-FNL, Belgium was exploring with the Burundian authorities ways to implement a two-part project that would entail, first, training FNL leaders so that they could be integrated into Burundian institutions, and second, training former combatants so that they could join the Burundian army. Recalling that one of the demands of the Palipehutu-FNL was for a rewriting of the history of Burundi, he suggested that such a project would be greatly facilitated by the involvement of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

26. **Mr. Meurs** (United States of America) said that the biannual review of implementation would be a very helpful reference for all stakeholders involved in Burundi's peacebuilding process. It would be particularly important in the coming year to assist the Government with capacity-building and the preparations for the 2010 elections. The Peacebuilding Commission should track the national consensus, keeping an eye on political developments in Burundi as the elections increasingly became a part of the political process, and ensuring that the elections themselves did not interfere with efforts to continue building a national consensus and dialogue. The Peacebuilding Commission had a role to play in encouraging work on land tenure issues and building agricultural productivity, two areas that were key to long-term stability in Burundi, as well as in analysing gaps and identifying opportunities for international stakeholders to sustain and expand worthwhile programmes.

27. **Mr. Harvey** (United Kingdom) noted that the report on the Strategic Framework showed that progress had been made on a number of fronts, notably the establishment of systems to reinforce good governance and to provide a framework for dialogue among all Burundians, as well as the transformation of the national army and police force. Also encouraging was the progress being made in strengthening regional ties, particularly through the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, which offered clear political and economic benefits for all the countries concerned.

28. The United Kingdom remained committed to supporting Burundi's development, including by improving the Government's ability to deliver services to its people, to provide equitable access to justice and to strengthen government systems, including public financial management mechanisms. The United Kingdom had been very concerned at the protracted parliamentary blockage, which had had a detrimental impact on a number of critical peacebuilding needs. Now that the blockage had been resolved, it was important that political parties should work in a spirit of cooperation rather than exclusion and confrontation. It was also important to keep the protection and promotion of human rights high on the agenda, and to bear in mind that failure to tackle impunity might lead to further violations.

29. He suggested that the next evaluation should include a more analytical and self-critical look at the Peacebuilding Commission's own role, with consideration of when and how the Commission might best provide input into the review process. Was it possible, for example, to provide figures on the resources that the Commission had helped to mobilize? Other questions to be asked were whether the Commission had identified critical funding gaps and how the Peacebuilding Fund projects were helping to achieve the goals established.

30. **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica) said that Burundi's situation had improved dramatically since just a few weeks earlier, when it had seemed that the country might slide back into conflict. Like the representative of the United States, he felt that the elections, although critically important, should in no way disturb the national consensus that existed at the current time, fragile as it was. He also hoped that Peacebuilding Fund resources would not have to be diverted in order to fund the elections, but rather that Burundi's international partners would assist in mobilizing the funding that would be needed.

31. During his recent visit to Burundi, he had been made very aware that all the problems facing the country — such as the issue of land tenure, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants and the proper management of the refugees now returning by the thousands — would require major financial resources in order to be resolved. Thus, he fully supported the recommendation that the Peacebuilding Commission should continue to give high priority to socio-economic recovery and should seek to encourage the development of innovative approaches to marshalling resources for that purpose.

32. **Mr. Valenzuela** (European Community) said that the European Community was particularly pleased at

the progress made by Burundi in some areas of good governance such as decentralization, and at the steps being taken in other areas such as improvements in security and in the justice system. The European Community was especially glad that the Partners Coordination Group was finally in place and was covering the implementation of both the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, which should ensure the necessary coordination and synergy.

33. The active engagement of all partners was essential in addressing those factors that might endanger efforts towards the consolidation of peace, such as the fragile budgetary situation, the blockage of legislative activity until recently and difficulties in implementing the ceasefire agreement. The European Community remained fully committed to contributing to the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in priority areas such as good governance, conflict resolution, budgetary support and humanitarian aid. Its cooperation programme with Burundi for the period 2008-2013 under the tenth European Development Fund had been set at 188 million euros.

34. The participation of the European Union in the Political Directorate indicated that real efforts were currently being made. Certainly, major challenges still remained in important areas, including security sector reform, transitional justice and human rights legislation, but the European Community was confident that collective effort and the firm commitment of the Burundian institutions would bear fruit in the near future.

35. **Mr. Antonio** (Angola) said that it was clear from the statement by the Burundian Minister for Foreign Affairs that political will in Burundi had never been lacking and that if the right help was provided to the country, its problems could be solved and eliminated. Burundi's problems had been identified and diagnosed, and were well known. It was time to move from diagnosis to concrete action.

36. **Mr. Deruffe** (France) said that managing the return of refugees was a major challenge for the future. Regional cooperation in that area had thus far been exemplary, particularly in the case of the United Republic of Tanzania, but he saw difficulties ahead, particularly in relation to the large numbers of ex-combatants that were being demobilized but not necessarily reintegrated into the official armed forces, in a country that already had a very high level of unemployment.

37. France was pleased that the security situation, while still precarious, had improved from its recent low point in April, when the Palipehutu-FNL had launched an attack on Bujumbura. It was particularly gratifying that the Palipehutu-FNL had returned to the negotiating table, hostilities had ceased, and the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement had gone into effect. Now, the FNL should evolve towards participation in the political life of Burundi. The recommendations formulated in Bujumbura on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, on the one hand, and security sector reform, on the other, contained a number of elements which the Peacebuilding Commission should take into account in its future work.

38. It was very important that the blockage in the National Assembly had been resolved, as that body needed to deal with some draft laws covering matters of crucial importance: human rights, reform of the criminal code, final abolition of the death penalty, and many others.

39. Finally, he drew attention to the extent to which the global food crisis and skyrocketing energy prices were increasingly hampering the efforts of the Government of Burundi to improve the quality of life of the country's people.

40. **Mr. Malgas** (South Africa) welcomed the recent and continuing progress in the efforts to establish an inclusive and durable peace in Burundi. Despite that progress, however, a number of difficult issues remained: land tenure, security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and poverty. All of those problems were being exacerbated by the global food and fuel crisis; all of them needed to be addressed in order to secure peace. Thus, he fully supported the appeal by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burundi for disbursement of the pledges made by the international community and donors.

41. **Mr. Kodera** (Japan) said that in the evaluation of developments in areas such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform, regular monitoring and stocktaking of the situation were crucial, not only for the effective implementation of the Strategic Framework but also for the analysis of whether conditions on the ground were moving towards sustainable peace and development.

42. The continuing political instability in Burundi over the last few months had gravely hampered the efforts of the Government, the Peacebuilding Commission and other stakeholders and had discouraged potential new development partners from joining the endeavour. The ceasefire agreement signed between the Government and the Palipehutu-FNL had created a great opportunity which all stakeholders should seize in order to intensify their engagement to secure peace and stability in Burundi. The role of the Peacebuilding Commission was to sustain international attention and mobilize resources while closely monitoring the situation so that the international community could respond promptly and effectively to needs on the ground.

43. Assistance could only become truly effective when there was true ownership by the Government and that ownership was respected. Thus, efforts by the Burundian Government should be further encouraged and the Peacebuilding Commission should continue to play a major role in securing the support that Burundi needed. The Japanese Government had also been providing assistance with some of Burundi's most daunting challenges, particularly in the area of helping refugees and internally displaced persons.

44. Rising food and oil prices were inevitably affecting peacebuilding efforts in Burundi. In order to mitigate that hardship, Japan had provided emergency food assistance for Burundi through the World Food Programme. The Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, held in June 2008, had highlighted Africa's significant progress in consolidating peace in recent years. On that occasion the Second Vice-President of Burundi had held bilateral meetings with Japan's Prime Minister, who had reaffirmed Japan's strong commitment to peacebuilding in Burundi.

45. **Ms. Batumubwira** (Burundi) said that it was gratifying to note the degree of commitment to the well-being of Burundi. The Commission members evidently understood the urgency of taking action and the need for rapid and flexible mechanisms for providing assistance, whether in terms of budgetary support or projects to be implemented. In particular, she thanked Norway for its rapid action in granting additional budgetary support.

46. Turning to some of the specific issues raised, she said that the question of land tenure would be a long-term problem — and indeed had been a problem even before the war — because Burundi was a small, densely populated country that still essentially lived off agriculture. That economic model would have to be changed, but that could not be done immediately in a country emerging from such a long conflict and from 40 years of dictatorship. Part of the change would have a regional dimension, because Burundi saw many future advantages in regional cooperation. As the Peacebuilding Commission pursued its advocacy in search of resources for Burundi, it should encourage donors to provide funds for projects in health and education, since those two areas were key to changing Burundi from an almost purely agricultural country to one that offered other options.

47. With respect to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, what had been envisaged would have to be completely reconsidered. With the impending demobilization and reintegration of the Palipehutu-FNL, the scale of the whole operation had changed, and it would require enormous resources if it was to be carried out in a fair and equitable way.

48. As to the political ramifications of the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement, she explained that some of the demands of the Palipehutu-FNL were quite normal and legitimate and could be resolved through existing mechanisms. There were others that were very specific to the situation of the Palipehutu-FNL and would have to be discussed. A major issue was that the Constitution of Burundi did not recognize political parties that were identified with a single ethnic group, but the Palipehutu-FNL was a grouping specifically of Hutus. If, then, the rebel movement wished to be registered as a legitimate political party, then not only would its military wing have to be separated from its political wing — which was now about to start — but its name and composition would have to be changed.

49. The rewriting of the history of Burundi was a recurrent theme of the Palipehutu-FNL, which was perhaps forgetting that the issue had already been addressed in the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. The history of Burundi would indeed be rewritten: all Burundians needed to understand what had happened to their country and above all how to prevent it from ever happening again.

50. With regard to transitional justice, she said that it was extremely important that the preparatory popular consultations should take place under ideal conditions, so that they would result in a procedure for establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. All Burundians had to be given an opportunity to speak, to hear and to understand what had happened in the country, and to express their views on how reconciliation could best be achieved. She did not see a major difficulty in establishing the right balance between the judicial component and the reconciliation component. What was important was to ensure that the whole operation enabled the Burundians to live in peace in the future.

51. She agreed that the recent blockage of legislative work had been unfortunate, but assured the Commission that both the National Assembly and the executive branch were working very hard to make up for lost time. She recalled that Burundi's experience of democracy was extremely short, amounting to just about three years. She was therefore very happy to hear that Belgium would be continuing its work of capacity-building in the legislature, which needed to understand better its role as the people's representative and its duty to pass laws so that the country could operate normally.

52. There was a need, too, for capacity-building on the administrative side, but that had another dimension: as soon as Government employees received a certain level of training, they left Government service. That was inevitable; Government employees were so badly paid that as soon as they had skills to offer they went to work for NGOs or for international organizations, or left to work in neighbouring countries. Once again the problem was one of budgetary support: if Government salaries remained unchanged, the cycle of training civil servants and then losing them would simply continue.

53. **Ms. McAskie** (Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support) said that, having been involved in the Peacebuilding Commission's work right from the beginning, she was pleased at the current progress, which was the result of collective efforts. While peacebuilding required external support, it would work only if it was internally driven, as it was in Burundi. Although she was leaving her post as Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, she would continue to follow Burundi's progress towards a peaceful and prosperous future.

54. **The Chairperson** said that, as he stood down as Chair of the Burundi configuration, he was grateful to all members for their cooperation and generosity over the last two years. He was impressed by the determination of all Burundians to consolidate peace and achieve progress in their daily lives, and by the commitment of Burundi's neighbours and of the South African facilitation team to stand by Burundi and find an African answer to an African challenge. He also welcomed the readiness of the international community to work with Burundi to secure peace and development.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.